

AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS

Please amend the drawings as noted on the corrected drawing sheets attached. Also attached are replacement drawing sheets including all of the figures appearing on the immediate prior version of the sheet. The replacement sheets are labeled "Replacement Sheet" in the page header.

Attachment: Replacement Sheet(s)
Annotated Sheet Showing Changes

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-14 are present in this application. By this Amendment, the drawings, the specification and claims 1, 2, 5 and 8 have been amended, and claim 14 has been added. Reconsideration in view of the above amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

In paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Office Action, the drawings were objected to for lacking reference signs mentioned in the description and for including reference characters not mentioned in the description. Corrected drawing sheets and replacement sheets are attached hereto. Withdrawal of the objections is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 3, 4, 7 and 13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) over U.S. Patent No. 6,736,496 to Hanaoka et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 defines an ink tank including, *inter alia*, an optical member having an ink contact face including a detection face at which a remaining amount of ink in the ink chamber is optically detected. A first ink absorbing member is disposed in the vicinity of the ink contact face. For example, with reference to Figure 5, an ink absorbing member such as the porous member 40 is brought into contact with a corner portion or the like of the prism 52. In a functionally related context, with reference to Figure 8 and Figure 10, the porous member is positioned so that an upper end face is substantially the same in height as a lower end face of the prism. In this manner, ink introduced from the bubble storage into the ink reservoir flows along the reflective faces of the right prism before being absorbed by the porous member. The ink held in the bubbles is sucked into the porous member because of the capillary action of the porous member.

In this context, the Office Action contends that Hanaoka discloses “a first ink absorbing member, disposed in the vicinity of the ink contact face, and capable of absorbing the ink in the ink chamber,” referring to Fig. 4(a), element 6. The foam member 6 in the Hanaoka patent, however, is not disposed in the vicinity of any ink contact face of the optical member 52.

In addition, claim 1 has been amended to recite that the ink chamber includes a first chamber formed with a vent port and a second chamber provided between the first chamber and the ink outlet, where the second chamber contains the first ink absorbing member and the optical member. In contrast, Hanaoka provides its foam member 6 in a foam containing portion 5 having a vent port 13. An optical member for detecting a remaining ink amount is disposed in an ink chamber 30 within a cylindrical frame portion 22 separate from the foam containing portion 5. For this reason also, Applicants submit that the rejection is misplaced.

With regard to the dependent claims, Applicants submit that these claims are allowable at least by virtue of their dependency on an allowable independent claim. Moreover, claim 3 recites that the first ink absorbing member is placed at an ink flow passage between the optical member and the ink outlet. The Office Action contends that this subject matter can be “clearly seen” in Figure 8. Applicants, however, respectfully disagree with this contention as the foam member 6 in Hanaoka patent Figure 8 is in no way disposed between the optical member 52 and the ink outlet 7.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

Applicants note with appreciation the indication of allowable subject matter in claims 2, 5, 6 and 8-12.

HANAOKA et al.
Appl. No. 10/635,915
March 24, 2005

New claim 14 defines, *inter alia*, the ink absorbing member disposed so as to come in contact with a part of the ink contact face of the optical member. This subject matter is also lacking in the Hanaoka patent.

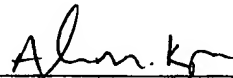
In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that the claims are patentable over the art of record and that the application is in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner believe that anything further is desirable in order to place the application in condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

Prompt passage to issuance is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

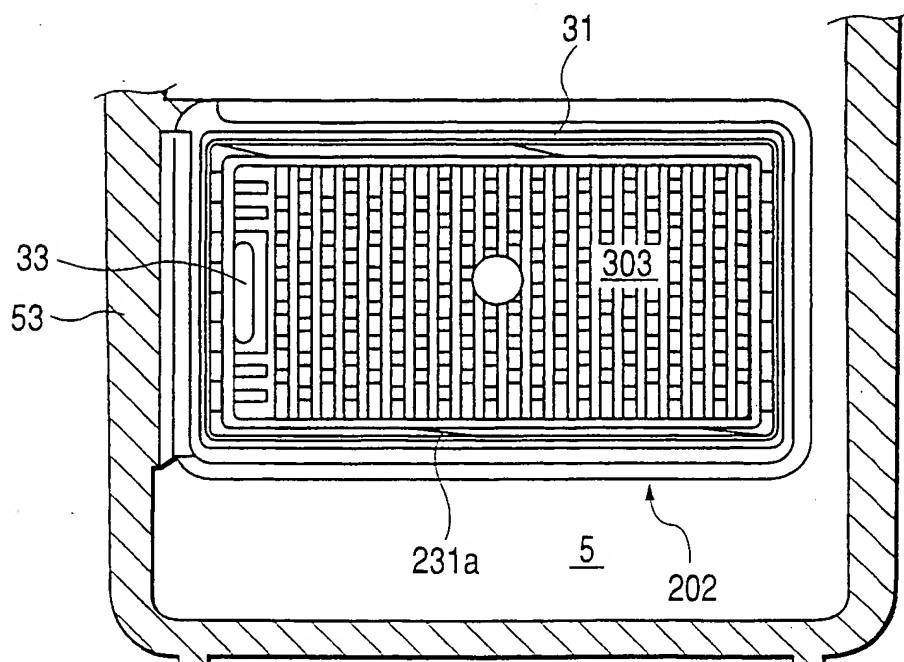
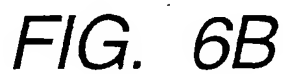
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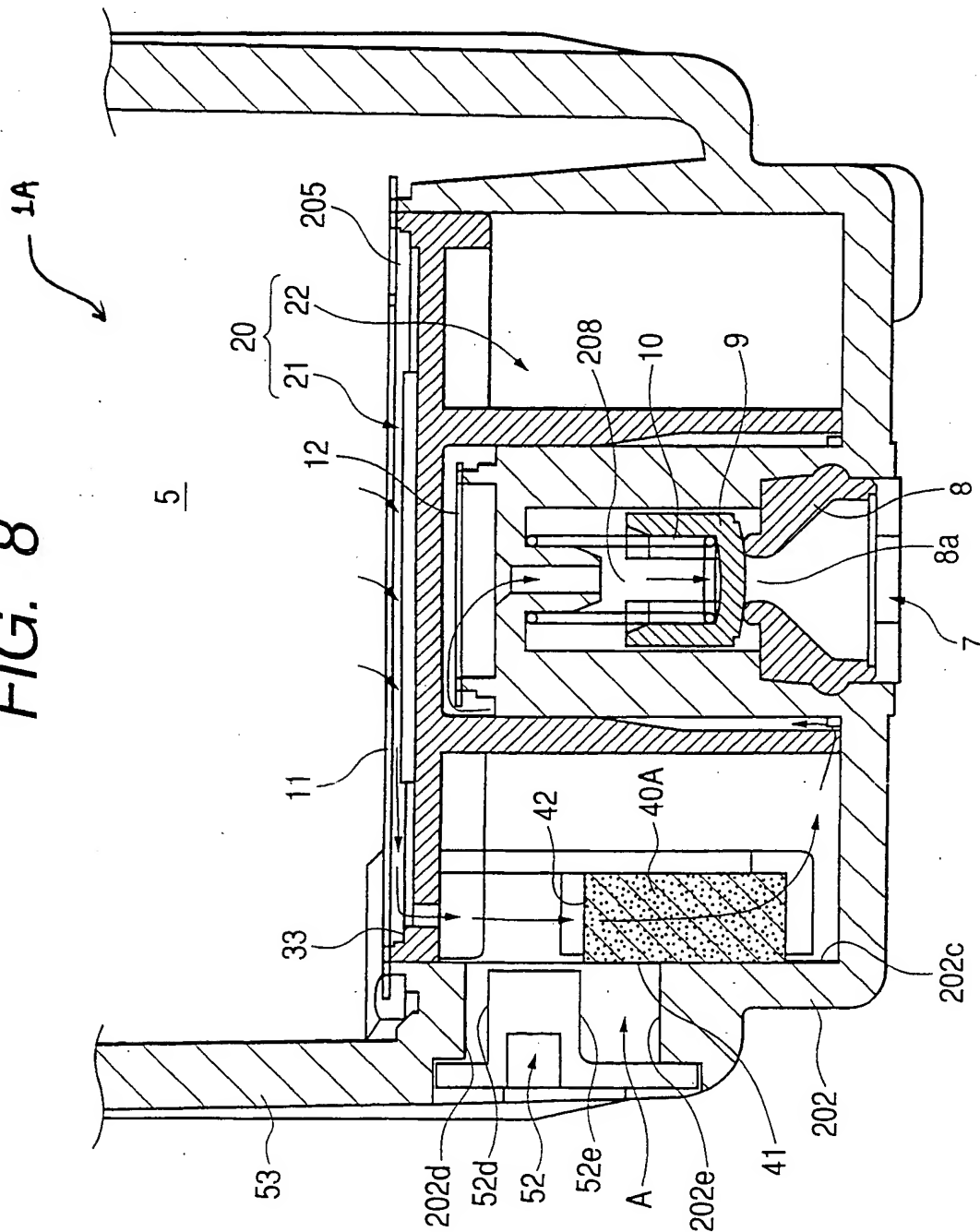


FIG. 11

